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metrical determination of the height, and the positions of the principal peaks of the chain of Caucasus, which will be visible along a great extent of the line of survey.

To ensure success as far as possible, the three observers will, with the instruments of the expedition, and under the direction of M. Struve, make a trial of levelling, upon an extent of about twenty versts. M. Massing will accompany the expedition as mechanician, to keep the instruments in order.

As to the barometrical observations, from the commencement of the work, two barometers provided with psychrometers will be sent to Taganrog, and to Astrakhan; M. Manne, school-director at the former, and M. Osse, a medical man at the latter, will be directed to observe them, and to note the changes several times a day during the time of the operations. The expedition will have three barometers, two of which, during the whole line of levelling, will be observed simultaneously wherever zenith distances shall be measured. These three barometers will serve also to compare the barometers fixed at Taganrog and Astrakhan, both at the beginning and the end of the operations, as also during the interruption in winter.

To ensure success, the duration of the expedition has been fixed at eighteen months; the members will leave St. Petersburg in the course of July, 1836; the trigonometrical operations will begin in the autumn, the most favourable season for this object, and will be suspended during the severe months of the winter, to be recommenced in the following spring.

The expedition will be furnished with the following instruments:—

A grand universal instrument by Ertel; horizontal circle twelve inches; vertical circle eight inches.

Two astronomical theodolites of eight inches, from Munich.

A small universal instrument; horizontal circle six inches; vertical circle four inches.

A transit instrument.

Seven mountain barometers, according to M. Parrot's construction; and spare tubes.

Two psychrometers.

Four chronometers.

Three compasses, &c. &c.

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VII.—*Letter from Mr. Davidson to the Secretary of the Geographical Society, dated Wednesday, 22nd May, 1836.*

SIR,—Hitherto I have had nothing of sufficient interest, in a geographical point of view, to warrant me in troubling you with a

letter. I cannot, however, fairly embark for Soudan without sending you a few cursory observations. After great difficulties, considerable expense, and much danger, I succeeded in passing through Lower Suse; and, overcoming all the obstacles thrown in my way by the Moorish government, and eluding their vigilance, I reached this place on the 22nd of April; since which, I have made excursions in every direction but North; twice to the Arab encampment in the Sahara, in hopes of making some arrangement for the furtherance of my object: in all these I was unsuccessful, and was fearful I should have to wait the departure of the Cafila from this place, but which will not set out till the beginning of September. This, added to the vexatious and expensive delays to which I have been already subjected, tended to damp my spirits, and throw a doubt upon my success. A portion of the great Cafila (which is expected to arrive in three days) reached this place on the 19th inst., and I lost no time in trying the all-powerful effect of gold on the five Dummany guides, to induce them to return to Soudan as soon as the fair was over, and their animals properly rested and fed for the journey. Sheik Beyrook, whose hospitality I am enjoying, and under whose protection and with whose sanction I travel, backing my suit, and stating that he has orders to forward me to Timbuctoo to attend the Sultan—the Dummanies required two days to consider the matter, and within the last hour have brought their answer, which I am truly happy to say is affirmative.

During this interval, everything that could be urged was most forcibly used to dissuade me from undertaking the journey at this season of the year; and great doubt as to whether even the children of the desert would make the attempt; the heat would be too oppressive for me to bear, the wells would in all probability be dry; the Deleim, the tribe most feared, would be all on the look-out, as the ostrich-hunting season was coming on; add to this the danger that so small a party would run, and the suspicion it would create in seeing them returning at this unusual season, with many other objections;—to these, again, the news the Cafila has brought, viz., that the Foulanies had experienced a serious defeat from the people of Bambara; that their loss in killed and wounded was immense; that the crops in the north of Soudan had almost wholly failed; that the Tuaricks, who had been driven from the neighbourhood of Timbuctoo, had taken up a strong position on both sides of the river, three days' journey to the east of the city, and were threatening to make a descent; that more than half the population had quitted Timbuctoo, partly from fear, and partly to seek subsistence. These last remarks are, I must confess, somewhat disheartening.

I have, however, notwithstanding, resolved on going, and would rather trust to Providence and a good constitution, than

run the risk of making some secret enemy here, or having my intentions known upon the route. We have decided not to take the caravan route at all. My Dummanies are so pleased this morning to think that I dare face all these dangers, and my having put it to them that being a firm believer in the mercy and protection of Providence, and a dutiful subject of my Lord the King, whose commands I am obeying, that I have no cause to fear. The Sheik Khurfee, whose friendship I have purchased, takes charge of me by command of his superior Sheik Beyrook. This man, now advanced in years, has made the journey twenty times, and four of these by a direct line from Wednoon, having once performed the journey in twenty-five days : he tells me if I can bear it, he will take me in thirty-five, as he wishes to show me two places where we are to stop a day or two, or he will make it forty days. He states there are but two wells on the whole route ; these will very likely be dry ;—we carry water for forty days, but he tells me he shall not give me any water on the road only at the two halts ; that the *herie* I am to ride will give me milk, and that he hopes to make me one of the *Eshrub el Rukh*, which performs the whole journey without eating, its allowance being camel's milk. I find I can work hard the whole day upon a draught of this, its satisfying quality being such that no other food is required. I have been some time in training ; a small portion of meat but every other day, no bread, a little tea ; and milk the day I do not take meat. With the exception of my stay at Mogador, I have had no bed for five months ; I can nearly warrant myself sun proof, my face, hands and arms, feet and legs, having been three times excoriated. I have now acquired the power of resisting the action of the sun ; I have adopted in toto the Arab dress, and am nearly as brown as some of the Paria caste.

From this we are to set out on the 6th of June, that being one of their lucky days ; so that by the time this reaches you, I hope, please God, to have arrived, or nearly, at Timbuctoo. I have established a code of communication with my friend Mr. Willshire, the Consul at Mogador ; I cannot sufficiently express my great obligations to this gentleman, without whose powerful assistance I could not have reached this place. I shall have much to state to the Society relating to him, and I have requested him to communicate with you on all occasions that he may hear of or from me. I shall write to you, my dear Sir, as fully as I can from Timbuctoo on my arrival. As letter-writing in this country is both difficult and dangerous, may I beg the favour of you, on any occasions that you may hear of me, to insert a line in some of the public papers for the benefit of my numerous friends.

With respect to the map, it has pressed all the places

in Suse too much to the west, excepting Terodant, which is as much too far east: it lays down the river Suse as considerable; it is quite dry fifteen miles from its mouth; the course of the Messa is nearly south, or S.  $\frac{1}{4}$  E.; Wednoon does not stand upon the river Akassa, nor is that the name,—it is the Assaka, and is 20 miles to the south. The course of the river (now dry) upon which Wednoon stands, runs E.S.E., and comes from the mountain near Terzerert, and the water is lost at Assereer, about 7 miles E.S.E. of Wednoon. Sok Assa is only 22 miles distant from Wednoon due east; Adrar at least 50 miles south of the position in which it is placed. I have been beyond the point marked, to a large Douar, and was told it was more than two days' journey to the south of the point at which I was. I can learn nothing of the Gebel Khal, although there are many of the Abusilahs here from Wadan. I merely mention these points; I hope to be able to show you on my return the positions they should occupy.

I must apologize to you for this letter, but it is written on the ground in an Arab tent, swarming with vermin, and I am frequently obliged to leave off in the middle of a word, from persons coming in, to whom a pen and paper are fearful things; it is a powerful weapon in our good country, but possesses mightier influence in these regions. I had forgotten to mention a curious circumstance relating to the weather here: the cold is most severe even at this period; they tell me they never get in their corn until the cold comes on, which lasts usually till the harvest is finished: we are all glad to put on two cloaks, although a month ago the heat was oppressive in the extreme. The small-pox is raging with great violence here and in the towns, and they fear will much lessen the number of persons expected at the Sok; I have more than one hundred patients, and nearly the whole population is under inoculation. This morning I have superintended the inoculation of the slaves, who have arrived within the last three days; the operation is performed here on the left ankle.

Presenting my compliments to Mr. Renouard, (to whom, and yourself, *Mulai Abou* desires his salaams,) and to those of the Officers and Members to whom I have the honour to be known,

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours, &c.,

JOHN DAVIDSON.

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Since the above was written, private letters have been received from Mr. Davidson, dated *July 14*, at *Tekenceou, Wednoon*, from which a few extracts are subjoined:—

“ On the 5th of June the great Cafila arrived, being a month after its time. It had been attacked: thirteen persons killed,

much property destroyed, and many slaves set at liberty. It brought accounts of famine in the upper part of Soudan, war in Bambara, and other fearful-sounding tales. I would listen to none ; but, alas ! my people would, and no persuasions could get them to start: all was stopped. I now determined upon going to the tents of the Dummanies, and trying what could be done with them, or the people of Akka, but I regret to say with no better success.

“ It is decided that I had better remain here for two months, as the war that has resulted from the attack on the Cafila has set all the tribes at variance ; no day has passed for the last fortnight without some engagement, the places are filled with wounded, I have to attend them all, and hope at last I shall make friends enough to carry my point successfully. Sheik Beyrook tells me that my detention here will not cause any delay in getting through the country : the only difference is, that I am stopping here during the rainy season, in which no one can travel in Soudan, instead of in the tents of the Dummanies. By the 1st of October at latest I hope to have actually started on my journey.”

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### VIII.—*Latest Accounts from Australia.*

No very recent accounts of the progress of discovery in Australia have reached this country since the Surveyor-General Major Mitchell’s official letter, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, detailing the circumstance of his excursion to explore the course of the Darling, behind the colony of New South Wales. This letter has also a painful interest attached to it, as relating the melancholy loss of Mr. Cunningham, the Colonial Botanist, who wandered from the party on the 17th April, 1835, and has not since been heard of.

“ *Camp, West of Harvey’s Range,*  
4th September, 1835.

“ SIR,—I have the honour to submit, for the information of his Excellency the Governor, the following report of the progress of the party, and result of the expedition, which his Excellency was pleased to place under my command, for the purpose of exploring the course of the river Darling.

“ Having joined this party at Buree on the 5th of April, I reconnoitred the country on the following day ; and on the 7th we proceeded, by a route not hitherto explored, to that part of the Darling specified in my instructions. My plan was to proceed along the high ground between the rivers Lachlan and Macquarie ; and which extended farther into the interior than had been explored. Thus I hoped to avoid the necessity for crossing any rivers, or incurring any risk of